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ABSTRACT

This survey was conducted to determen the extent of course offerings by the accredited and the largest unaccredited journalism programs in the areas of nonverbal communications, research methods for working journalists, media economics and management, major issues in contemporary society, the urban community, and new technology. Two mailings and some telephone calls produced responses from 52 (85 percent) of the accredited and nine (90 percent) of the 10 largest unaccredited programs, giving a combined reponse rate of 86 percent. Three of the advocated kinds of courses were reported as offered in about two thirds of the accredited and large unaccredited journalism programs. These courses are reasearch methods for working journalists, media economics, and major issues in contemporary society. A course in nonverbal communications was reported as being offered at about one-third of the schools. Courses in the new technology of mass communication and the anatomy of the urban community were found to be offered by fewer than one-fifth of the schools. (The results of this survey are discussed at length, and data are presented in table format.) (RB)

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CURRENT OFFERINGS IN SIX SPECIFIED SUBJECTS IN ACCREDITED (and the largest unaccredited) SCHOOLS AND DEPARTMENTS OF JOURNALISM

This survey was conducted for the Conference on "Education for Newspaper Journalists in the Seventies and Beyond," sponsored by the American Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation in cooperation with the Association for Education in Journalism, to be held at Reston, Virginia, October 31 - November 2, 1973.

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Among the propositions to be discussed at this conference are six suggesting that certain specific kinds of courses should be included in the journalism curriculum. Consequently, this survey was conducted to determine the extent of such offerings in the accredited and largest unaccredited journalism programs in the United States.

In May of 1973, a questionnaire was sent to the administrative heads of the 61 schools and departments which were accredited by the American Council on Education for Journalism for the 1972-73 academic year. The questionnaire was also sent to the administrative heads of the 10 unaccredited schools and departments which had the largest enrollments of journalism majors as reported in the Journalism Educator of January, 1973.

Two mailings and some telephone calls produced responses from 52 (85%) of the accredited programs and nine (90%) of the 10 largest unaccredited programs. The response rate for the two groups combined is 86%. Since no meaningful differences between the two groups were observed, the data were pooled for the analysis that follows.

Because responses were obtained from almost all members of the universe as defined for this study (all accredited journalism programs and the 10 largest unaccredited ones), the data are subject to very little sampling error. The findings cannot necessarily be applied, however, to smaller unaccredited journalism programs.

Non-Verbal Communication

Proposition 2 holds that journalism schools should offer a course in non-verbal communication. Although 27 respondents said their schools offer such a course, five of them apparently confused "non-verbal" with "non-oral." They listed such courses as news writing and editing and in a couple of cases added comments such as "none of our courses deals primarily with speaking." In other words, 22 (see Table 1) of the respondents (36%) listed courses which appeared to be concerned essentially with non-verbal communication. Ten of these, however, appeared more likely to be the traditional photojournalism course than the broader kind of non-verbal communication course that is advocated in Proposition 2.* The titles or descriptions of only eight of the courses clearly indicated that they were general non-verbal communication classes.

As shown in Table 2, 46% of the 22 departments offering what they consider to be a non-verbal communication course require it of journalism majors, while it is strictly an elective in 40%. In the other 14% of the schools, the course is elective for some students and required for others. For example, it may be required of students in one sequence but elective for those in other sequences. Or it may be required of undergraduates but is elective for graduates.

In about half of the schools, the course is open to both undergraduate and graduate students, while in most of the others it is open only to undergraduates. In only one school is the course open only to graduate students.

The non-verbal communication courses tend to be rather new. Almost two-thirds of them were first offered in 1960 or more recently. Close

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* One respondent listed a course titled "Press Photography" and then wrote: "Is this what you mean? We don't teach go-go dancing."

to a fifth of them were first offered in 1949 or earlier, but all of these appear to be rather traditional photojournalism courses.

About two-thirds of the schools offer the course in two or more academic terms** during a calendar year, and collective enrollment is large. Since the course is required of all journalism majors in about half the schools, it is not surprising that half the schools report that it is taken by 100 or more students during a typical calendar year.

Research Methods for Working Journalists

Proposition 3 contends that journalism students should take a course in research methods that is geared to the work of reporters and editors rather than being a research methods course that is aimed at the study of communication processes and behavior in general.

Approximately 61% of the respondents said they offer such a course, but as shown in Table 3, the titles or descriptions of not quite half of these courses indicate clearly that such is the case. The other half appear to be courses of the more general communication research type, but which the respondent considers to be readily applicable to the working journalist's world. (In fact, one respondent who said the school does not offer a course pointed specifically at the working journalist's needs wrote: "Our basic research methods course is designed to give students an understanding of communication research methods which can be applied on the business side, in editorial decision-making, in subsequent graduate study, etc. It is not primarily devoted to research by working journalists--reporters, deskmen, etc. Even so, the student who takes the course and becomes a working journalist will understand such research, why it is done, how it is done, etc.)

There is a tendency for the research methods course to be required of all journalism majors at the graduate level, but not at the undergraduate level. In fact, the course is open to only graduate students at half the schools.

The research courses are generally recent curricular additions, with two-thirds of them offered for the first time in 1960 or later. Only 5% of them originated before 1950.

Since enrollment is often limited to graduate students, it is not surprising that the number of students taking these courses tends to be small. Fewer than 50 students take the course in a full calendar year at four-fifths of the schools offering it.

The modal frequency of offering the course is once or twice in each calendar year.

Media Economics and Management

Some 62% of the respondents said they offer a course in media economics and management as advocated in Proposition 8. The titles or descriptions of almost all of these courses, as shown in Table 4, clearly indicated that such is the case.

** In this study, "academic term" refers to whatever calendar unit the respondent's school employs: quarter, semester, trimester, etc.

An elective in almost all cases, the course is open to both undergraduate and graduate students in two-thirds of the schools. In all but one of the others, it is required of only certain students.

Even though it was put into the curriculum in the 1950's or 1960's at two-thirds of the schools, the course still draws comparatively small enrollments. In a calendar year, it is taken by fewer than 50 students at 84% of the schools, where it is commonly offered just once a year.

Anatomy of the Urban Community

Only 10 (16%) of the respondents said they offer a course devoted primarily to the study of contemporary urban society as advocated in Proposition 10. The titles or descriptions of seven of these courses supported the claim.

The modal characteristics of these courses, as shown in Table 5, are as follows:

Open to both undergraduate and graduate students, the elective course was put into the curriculum in the 1970's. Offered once a year, it has an enrollment of fewer than 50 students.

Quite a few of the respondents who said they offer no such course pointed out that such study is available in other departments on campus and that journalism students are often encouraged to enroll.

Major Issues in Contemporary Society

Proposition 11 contends that journalism schools or departments should offer a course examining major issues in contemporary society. Such was reported to be the case at 67% of the responding schools. In only half of these cases, however, did the title or description clearly indicate that the course had such content.

Table 6 shows that the course is most often an elective (59%) but is required of all journalism students at nearly a third of the schools. Usually open to both graduate and undergraduate students, the contemporary issues course is most likely to have been added to the curriculum in 1960 or later.

The frequency of offering the course varies greatly among the schools, ranging from not at all to four terms in the typical calendar year. The overwhelming majority of schools, however, offer it one to three terms a year. Enrollment also varies greatly, with 15% of the schools reporting that the course is taken by fewer than 20 students in a calendar year and 32% reporting that it is taken by 100 or more students.

New Technology

Only 13% of the respondents said they offer a course devoted primarily to the new technology of journalism as advocated in Proposition 16. And the titles or descriptions of only two of these courses made it clear that such is the case.

Quite a few of the respondents who said they do not offer such a course reported that they incorporate information concerning the new technology into courses in management or editing.

As shown in Table 7, the modal characteristics of the eight courses reported as being primarily concerned with the new technology are as

follows:

Open to both graduates and undergraduates or only to undergraduates, the course is an elective or is required of only certain kinds of students. Added to the curriculum in the 1970's, the new technology course is offered each calendar year and draws from 20 to 100 or more students.

Enlightening Comments

Respondents were invited to describe their offerings in the six specified areas, and quite a few of them did. Below are quotations which give some of the flavor of "editorial comments" that went beyond course description.

In response to the question about a course devoted primarily to the anatomy of the urban community, one respondent said his school does not offer one and wrote:

"More appropriately the function of other departments."

In answering the same question, another respondent said his school offers a course in "Community Structure and Development" but that "It's a PR course. Few journalism majors take it."

In reporting that his school does not offer a course in research methods for the working journalist, one respondent wrote:

"This information, as it pertains in specific situations, is offered in a number of courses including reporting, editorial writing, feature writing, magazine article writing, and others." (Another respondent listed nine courses into which such information is incorporated.)

In reporting that his school does not offer a course devoted primarily to non-verbal communication, one respondent wrote:

"Are you kidding?"

Another respondent reported that his school does not offer a course devoted primarily to media economics and management and that such study is "not considered essential to undergraduate preparation."

And, finally, in answering the question concerning a course on the new technology of mass communication, one person wrote:

"I don't know what you mean."

SUMMARY

Three of the advocated kinds of courses were reported as being offered in about two-thirds of the accredited and large unaccredited journalism programs. These courses are: research methods for working journalists, media economics and management, and major issues in contemporary society.

A course in non-verbal communication was reported as being offered at about one-third of the schools. Courses in the new technology of mass communication and the anatomy of the urban community were found to be offered in fewer than one-fifth of the schools. These few schools may, however, be setting a new trend: most of the courses in these three areas have been added to the curricula in the 1970's.

None of the six advocated types of courses is at this time required of all journalism students in a majority of the schools offering it. The only one that comes close to being so is the course in non-verbal communication. It is required of all majors at 10 of the 22 schools where it is reported as being offered.

Most of the courses tend to be open to both graduate and undergraduate students. The one exception is the research methods course,

which is open to only graduate students at a majority of the schools.

Four of the six kinds of courses tend to be offered during two or more academic terms each year. The exceptions are media economics and the new technology of mass communication. The modal frequency for each of those two types is once each calendar year.

The cumulative number of students in a calendar year is fewer than 100 for a majority of the schools offering any one of the courses except for non-verbal communication, which is taken by 100 or more students at 11 of the 22 schools offering it. The courses in research methods and media economics tend especially to include small numbers of students, with the total year's enrollment seldom reaching 50.

The authors noticed, almost as soon as the returns started coming in, a phenomenon that has been observed in public opinion polling: by asking a question, you may be creating an opinion. When journalism administrators were asked whether their schools or departments offer certain courses, it appears that they sometimes felt they should say "yes" even when the course titles or descriptions which they provided did not particularly support the statement.* Only in the rarest of cases did a respondent write "are you kidding?" or "not considered essential."

Another observation of some interest is the fact that in every instance where a course was reported as being offered, the respondent said his school or department plans to continue it. Not once was it said that the course is to be dropped. Two possible reasons for this 100% response may be suggested. First, it may be that once a course has made its difficult way through curriculum committees and budget offices, the thought of dropping it is too painful to endure. Or it may be that the six kinds of courses dealt with here have proved in every case to be of sufficient value to warrant continued effort. Which of these explanations, if either, is correct, the authors leave to the judgement of the conference participants.

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* The authors had expected that such yea-saying might be encouraged by the questionnaire. Consequently, they started it with a set of questions as to whether a course devoted primarily to editing was offered. They knew that it was offered in almost all cases (97% said "yes"), but they hoped that giving the respondent a chance to demonstrate early that his school or department is "with it" would reduce the need subsequently to say "yes." If asking this first set of questions did reduce yea-saying, the evidence suggests that the phenomenon may be especially troublesome in a study such as this one.

TABLE 1 - Number and Percentage of Accredited and Large Unaccredited Journalism Programs Offering Certain Courses (N=61)

Have at least one course devoted primarily to:	No.	%
Non-verbal communication	22	36
Research methods for working journalists	37	61
Media economics and management	38	62
Anatomy of the urban community	10	16
Major issues in contemporary society	41	67
New technology	8	13

TABLE 2 - Characteristics of Courses in Non-Verbal Communication (N=22)

Title or description clearly identifies course as emphasizing non-verbal communication	No.	%
	8	36
For journalism majors, course is		
Elective	9	40
Required	10	46
Other	3	14
Course is open to:		
Undergraduates only	9	41
Graduate students only	1	5
Both	12	55
Course was first offered in:		
1970 or later	9	41
1960-69	5	23
1950-59	3	14
1949 or earlier	4	18
Not ascertained	1	5
Approximate number of students who take course in full calendar year:		
19 or fewer	3	14
20-49	3	14
50-99	5	23
100 or more	11	50
Number of academic terms in which course is offered in typical calendar year:		
0	1	5
1	6	27
2	6	27
3	8	36
4	1	5

TABLE 3 - Characteristics of Courses in Research Methods for Working Journalists (N=37)

	No.	%
Title or description clearly identifies course as emphasizing research methods for working journalists	16	43
For journalism majors, co rse is:		
Elective	19	51
Required	12	32
Other	6	16
Course is open to:		
Undergraduates only	3	8
Graduate students only	20	54
Both	14	38
Course was first offered in:		
1970 or later	12	32
1960-69	13	35
1950-59	7	19
1949 or earlier	2	5
Not ascertained	3	8
Approximate number of students who take course in full calendar year:		
19 or fewer	11	30
20-49	19	51
50-99	6	16
100 or more	0	0
Not ascertained	1	3
Number of academic terms in which course is offered in typical calendar year:		
0	1	5
1	6	27
2	6	27
3	8	36
4	1	5

TABLE 4 - Characteristics of Courses in Media Economics and Management (N=38)

	No.	%
Title or description clearly identifies course as emphasizing media economics and management	36	95
For journalism majors, course is:		
Elective	32	84
Required	1	3
Other	5	13
Course is open to:		
Undergraduates only	7	18
Graduate students only	5	13
Both	26	68
Course was first offered in:		
1970 or later	6	16
1960-69	15	40
1950-59	8	21
1949 or earlier	6	16
Not ascertained	3	8
Approximate number of students who take course in full calendar year:		
19 or fewer	15	40
20-49	17	45
50-99	3	8
100 or more	2	5
Not ascertained	1	3
Number of academic terms in which course is offered in typical calendar year:		
0	5	13
1	25	66
2	8	21

TABLE 5 - Characteristics of Courses in the Anatomy of the Urban Community (N=10)

	No.	%
Title or description clearly identifies course as emphasizing study of the urban community	7	70
For journalism majors, course is:		
Elective	7	70
Required	1	10
Other	2	20
Course is open to:		
Undergraduates only	3	30
Graduate students only	1	10
Both	6	60
Course was first offered in:		
1970 or later	6	60
1960-69	3	30
1950-59	0	0
1949 or earlier	1	10
Approximate number of students who take course in full calendar year:		
19 or fewer	4	40
20-49	3	30
50-99	2	20
100 or more	1	10
Number of academic terms in which course is offered in typical calendar year:		
1	6	60
2	3	30
4	1	10

TABLE 6 - Characteristics of Courses in Major Issues in Contemporary Society (N=41)

	No.	%
Title or description clearly identifies course as emphasizing major issues in contemporary society	20	49
For journalism majors, course is:		
Elective	24	59
Required	13	32
Other	4	10
Course is open to:		
Undergraduates only	11	27
Graduate students only	6	15
Both	24	59
Course was first offered in:		
1970 or later	8	20
1960-69	17	42
1950-59	8	20
1949 or earlier	5	12
Not ascertained	3	7
Approximate number of students who take course in full calendar year:		
19 or fewer	6	15
20-49	10	24
50-99	11	27
100 or more	13	32
Not ascertained	1	2
Number of academic terms in which course is offered in typical calendar year:		
0	1	2
1	14	34
2	14	34
3	10	24
4	2	5

TABLE 7 - Characteristics of Course in the New Technology of Mass Communication (N=8)

	No.	%
Title or description clearly identifies course as emphasizing the new technology	2	25
For journalism majors, course is:		
Elective	4	50
Required	1	13
Other	3	38
Course is open to:		
Undergraduates only	3	38
Graduate students only	1	13
Both	3	38
Not ascertained	1	13
Course was first offered in:		
1970 or later	7	88
1960-69	1	13
Approximate number of students who take course in full calendar year:		
19 or fewer	0	0
20-49	3	38
50-99	1	13
100 or more	2	25
Not ascertained	2	25
Number of academic terms in which course is offered in typical calendar year:		
0	1	13
1	4	50
2	1	13
4	1	13
Not ascertained	1	13